

**STATUS OF CLAIMS**

Claims 1-11, 14-17 and 35-40 are pending.

Claims 1-11, 14-17 and 35-40 stand rejected.

Claims 1 – 14 and 18 - 40 have been cancelled without prejudice herein.

**REMARKS**

Applicants gratefully acknowledge the allowance of Claims 15 – 17.

Claims 1 – 11, 14, 35, 36, 38 and 40 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. 112, first paragraph, as failing to comply with the written description requirement. Claims 1 – 8, 10 – 11, 14 and 36 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as being anticipated by Ota, US Patent No. 3,668,106. Claim 9 stands rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Ota in view of Check III, US Patent No. 5,467,217. Claim 35 stands rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) over Ota in view of Iwanaga et al., US Patent No. 5,739,946. Claims 38 and 40 stand rejected as being unpatentable over Ota in view of Hanji et al., JP 01-211735. Applicants respectfully disagree.

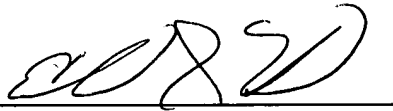
However, in the interest of expediting allowance of present claims 15-17, Applicants have cancelled claims 1 – 14 and 18 – 40 without prejudice; Applicants reserve the right to present these claims in this or a subsequent patent application.

**CONCLUSION**

In view of the foregoing, Applicants believe they have addressed all outstanding grounds raised in the present Office action, and respectfully submit the present case is in condition for allowance, early notification of which is earnestly solicited.

Should there be any questions or outstanding matters, the Examiner is cordially invited and requested to contact Applicants' undersigned attorney at his number listed below.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'EJH', is written over a horizontal line.

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Dated: March 9, 2007